THE BLACK PIGEON

 by ANNE AUSTIN

THIS HAS HAPPENED

The body of "Handsome Harry" Borden, promoter, murdered Saturday afternoon, is found beneath the closed airshaft window of his private office Monday by his secretary, Ruth Lester.

Detective McMann learns of five people who could have murdered Borden: Mrs. Borden, estranged wife; Ruth Lester; Benny Smith, office boy; Jack Hayward, insurance broker with office directly across the airshaft; and Rita Dubois, dancer, Borden's last sweetheart.

Suspicion is heaviest upon Hayward, Ruth's fiance, because of overheard threats against Borden. Bloody footprints of a pigeon inside and outside the airshaft window indicate the window was open until after the murder.

Benny Smith, who has not reported for work, is sent for, as are Minnie Cassidy and Letty Miller, scrubwomen. Bill Cowan strengthens suspicion against Hayward by telling of hearing Borden's angry voice when he, Cowan, called Hayward Saturday at 2:10 and was put on a busy line.

Ruth tells McMann about Cleo Gilman, recent mistress of Borden's. She is sought. Rita Dubois arrives. She says Borden had failed to meet her at the station, that she had called him, found his line busy at 2:10, then called again and was told by Borden to come to his office. Did so and received from Borden second half of a torn $500 bill, but left him alive at 2:30.

She denies having robbed his body of $500 more in smaller bills. Ashe, Borden's manservant, is sent for, but is preceded by Ferber, fingerprint expert, whose findings reveals fingerprints of unidentified woman on the glass panel of the door between outer and inner office. McMann suspects they were made by Cleo Gilman, now urgently sought by police.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY
CHAPTER XXVI

Ruth Lester's hand tightened convulsively over Jack Hayward's as she listened to McMann's half of the telephone conversation which the detective sergeant was carrying on with his superior officer at police headquarters.

"So Cleo skipped out Saturday noon, bag and baggage, eh?" McMann spoke into the mouthpiece, his voice registering the frown which was beetling his thick brows and snarling the corners of his mouth. "Who's on the job? . . . Clay, eh? Put him on the phone if he's there now, please. . . . Hello, Clay! What's the dope on this Gilman dame? Did she say where she was going? . . . No? . . . Oh, back Monday or Tuesday morning, huh? Well, be on hand to welcome her home and tell her that McMann wants a chat with her. . . . Sure, go through her apartment! What do you think this is—a tea party?"

The detective slammed the receiver upon the hook, strode to the door between the private office and the outer office of the Borden suite. "Birdwell! Take Mrs. Borden and Miss Dubois down the hall and put them in Covey's charge until I need them again. He's still in that vacant suite, isn't he?"

"Yes, sir—interviewing tenants who could have heard the shot fired, sir," Birdwell answered in his weary voice. "Frank Ashe, Borden's manservant, waiting to see you."

"All right — show him in," McMann directed, as he held the door wide for Mrs. Borden and Rita to pass through, the widow thanking him with a faint, sad smile, the dancer wrapping her fur coat about her slim body with assumed nonchalance, utterly belied by the chalky pallor of her face.

As a gray-haired, anemic-looking man was about to enter the private office, McMann held him back with an arm stretched across the doorway, and turned his head to address Jack Hayward:

"That's all for the present, Hayward. Thanks for the fingerprints," and he grinned crookedly. "Guess you knew they wouldn't help us much, since you'd been here this morning after Miss Lester discovered the body. By the way, while you were out to lunch, I performed an interesting experiment." He reached out for the door and closed it in the man-servant's face.

Jack Hayward's steady bronze-brown eyes did not flicker, nor did his color change. "Yes?"

"Yes! . . . When I was in your office this morning, looking for the gun you seemed to be so sure I'd find in the bottom drawer of your desk, and which wasn't there—oddly enough!—I found something else. A missing link, you might say."

"That's interesting," Jack said evenly, despite the frantic warning of Ruth's tightened fingers upon his arm. "May I ask what it was?"

"Oh—nothing much," the detective grinned. "Just a nice long 10-foot pole with a hook on the end of it — the kind of pole that's ordinarily used to pull windows down from the top, but which—as I took pains to prove—can be used very nicely for closing windows across an eight-foot airshaft, if a chap gets just the right leverage. A nice useful sort of pole, if a fellow very badly wants a window closed and doesn't want to be seen walking along a hall and unlocking another fellow's door in order to close it. You found it very handy, didn't you, Hayward?"

Jack's handsome face darkened with anger, but his voice was steady as he answered: "I did not close Borden's window with a pole or in any other manner, McMann. There was no reason why I should. But it must have been a very interesting experiment. Did you also demonstrate to your own satisfaction how I robbed the body and secured Miss Lester's automatic, all with this very useful window pole?"

McMann's grin widened. "I admit that at noon I was a little bit worried about those details, but a charming visitor has pretty well cleared them up for me."

Ruth could remain silent no longer. Her voice quivered with anger as she lashed out at the self-satisfied detective: "That's not fair, Mr. McMann! Rita Dubois has cleared Jack by insisting that Mr. Borden was alive when she came here Saturday afternoon at 17 minutes after two, at which time Jack was with me in the Chester Hotel dining room."

The grin left McMann's broad, thin mouth. He looked at the angry, trembling girl gravely, almost compassionately. "I'm sorry, Miss Lester, but what Rita Dubois says doesn't mean that to me!" and the detective snapped his fingers.

"You saw me catch her in the lie. The facts are all I'm interested in. Rita had a key to this office. She could have entered, whether Borden was alive or dead. She got from him—alive or dead—half of a $500 bill and $500 more in smaller bills. At least we know she got the torn half of the $500 banknote, and we can take the other money for granted, I think.

"Alive, Borden wouldn't have given her a cent until she'd come across — kept her part of the bargain, which was to go away with him and become his mistress. You heard him say so yourself. Therefore, she got the money from Borden, dead, not Borden alive."

But Ruth was not defeated by the detective's logic. "Then you think she was so greedy that she stole my gun, too—walked out of here with the very weapon which she must have believed had killed Mr. Borden? And which did kill him! I know it did—"

McMann shrugged. "And Hayward's gun? What about that?"

Ruth tried to control her anger, to speak reasonably, convincingly: "Mr. McMann, I don't believe the disappearance of Mr. Hayward's gun has any connection at all with this case. He himself told you he owned it, where to look for it. Was that the action of a guilty man? Won't you work — just for the sake of fairness — on the theory that Mr. Hayward's gun was stolen by a petty thief, prowling through the building Saturday?

"There was a gun in these offices—please don't forget that! We know, from the thumbprints on the bottom drawer of my desk, that Mr. Borden opened that drawer, in all probability to get the gun to defend himself against threatened attack. Maybe he always kept it handy when he was alone in the office. I don't know! But he almost certainly had it in his possession or on his desk Saturday before he was killed.

"An unknown woman was in these offices some time Saturday afternoon. You have the finger prints. I believe that Rita was telling the truth when she said that Borden was alive, that he gave her his half of the $500 bill to make his peace with her, for having missed the train to Winter Haven. After all, she had kept her part of the bargain. She had waited for him at the station; he could not know that she would ditch him after getting the money.

"The $500, for some reason, was of vital importance to Rita Dubois. Either Mr. Borden gave it to her of his own accord, or—she killed him in desperation when he refused. That is the only reason why Rita Dubois would have taken my gun away with her — because she had used it upon Harry Borden."

McMann had listened patiently, even respectfully, to Ruth's long passionately sincere speech. When she paused, breathless, he asked quietly: "You don't believe that Rita killed Borden, do you, Miss Lester?"

"No! I know she lied a lot, and that she was desperate for money, but I don't believe she killed him. Neither do I believe she robbed his dead body. What I do believe Mr. McMann, is that Harry Borden's murderer — or murderess — has not yet been questioned."

McMann smiled, but not derisively. "Cleo Gilman? If she was here Saturday afternoon, she walked up — part of the way, at least. Moran, the elevator operator, seemed pretty sure that he had brought no other passengers to this floor."

"I wouldn't count too heavily on Micky Moran's memory, Mr. McMann," Ruth flashed. "And granting that Micky is infallible, isn't it reasonable to suppose that a person coming here to see Mr. Borden after a telephone quarrel with him, a person he feared and armed himself against, would have walked at least a flight or two, rather than be seen getting off the elevator right in front of Mr. Borden's offices?"

"Just a minute, Miss Lester," McMann brushed her question aside. "You refer to a telephone quarrel. Surely you're not forgetting that that telephone quarrel, or part of it, was overheard by Bill Cowan, when he was cut in on Hayward's busy line? How can you explain that? You don't think it was your petty thief, prowling through the Starbridge Building, who called up Borden and quarreled with him, after stealing Hayward's gun?"

Ruth looked staggered for a moment, than triumphant. "Telephone operators have been known to give wrong numbers as well as plugging new calls in on busy lines. Mr. Borden's telephone numbers are Main 3500 and 3501. Mr. Hayward's number is Main 3051. Mr. Cowan was formerly rather a close friend of Mr. Borden's. He could easily have given the operator the Borden number, which he must have called many times in the past, thinking that he was giving Mr. Hayward's number. Remember, he did not hear Jack's voice—only Borden's!"

McMann chuckled. "You're very clever, Ruth Lester. You can have a job under me any time you like. . . . That's all for the present, Hayward. You can get back to your work."

"Thanks!" Jack bowed ironically. Then, to Ruth, in a low voice: "You're a darling and I love you."

"All right, Ashe!" McMann called through the door by which Jack was leaving.

The gray-haired, bloodless-looking little man who had been Harry Borden's man-servant slipped noiselessly, diffidently, through the door, and took the chair which McMann indicated — opposite his own at Borden's desk.

"Sit down, Miss Lester," McMann invited. "I may need you. . . . Now, Ashe, how long had you been with Mr. Borden?"

"Ten months, sir."

"When did you last see your employer?"

"Saturday morning, sir. He left his apartment at half-past nine, as usual. He told me he would be out of town for the week-end, and that I was to pack his bags. I was to expect him for dinner Monday evening—him and a young lady," the valet answered.

"Did he say who the young lady was?"

"Yes, sir. He said Miss Dubois would dine with him."

"Where were you Saturday afternoon, Ashe?" McMann pounced suddenly.

The valet looked startled, then faintly indignant. "I, sir? I had lunch with my daughter—my married daughter, Mrs. Bernard Williams, in Washington Heights, and took her to a neighborhood movie—my daughter and her two children. At half-past four her husband met us in the lobby of the theater and all of us—"

"All right, Ashe!" McMann interrupted the iron-clad alibi impatiently. "Now tell me: have you any knowledge or suspicion as to who killed your master?"

The anemic little man straightened in his chair, then leaned forward slightly toward the detective as he said in a curiously impressive voice:

"Yes, sir, I think I have, sir!"

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Ashe reveals that his master was in mortal terror of a woman. In the next chapter.

COOLIDGE REGIME A PROSPEROUS ONE

"Prosperity" Linked Inseparably With Outgoing Executive's Name

Washington, Feb. 28 (AP) — The American presidential administration that began in the lamp-lighted dimness of an austere room in a New England farm home August 2, 1923, ends March 4, 1929, historically labelled with the word "prosperity."

On March 4, 1925, when Calvin Coolidge renewed his vows as thirtieth chief executive of the United States, after 19 months' service of the term of Warren G. Harding, the formal words of his acceptance contained the observation that he foresaw an era of greater prosperity ahead of the American people.

At that time, the American trade balance was at a favorable level. The clinging fingers of post war readjustments, however, had not been entirely loosened from industry.

The years that followed witnessed American industry reaching new high records and the development of a Damon and Pythian affinity between the Coolidge administration and the term prosperity. Coolidge and prosperity became inextricably connected, a concept of virtually universal acceptance, and the New Englander relinquishes office with that conception riding at its highest.

Coolidge's six years in the White House saw, in equal importance, significant steps taken by his administration in an American-pioneered path towards world peace and the beginning of studied efforts to gain a better rapprochement between the United States and the countries of South America.

That policy has caused the world to focus sharper attention on the potentialities and the possibilities of the South American impress on the affairs of other countries and the probable effect of the future relationships with that continent in the course of nations, one with another.

Hand in hand with Coolidge prosperity acclamation went his well publicized propensity toward economy in all things. The record of his regime is high-lighted with vetoes of measures that carried, in many instances, vast expenditures of public funds. In the wake of such actions, time and again, followed bitterness and recriminations, but the backwash failed to sunder the close-lipped calm of the slight Vermonter and he continued unswervingly on his course, let the clamor swell as it would.

The first 19 months' service as chief executive witnessed a carrying on of Harding policies. The tenure was marked by constant public expression for economy and an emphasizing of the vision of greater prosperity.

The Harding cabinet was retained, and the groundwork was laid for the naval disarmament conference which ended in an impasse and led to the president's espousal of the 15 cruiser bill.

The Coolidge actions during the period prior to March 4, 1925, were characterized by the same firmness exhibited throughout his term of office, but his pledge to continue the policies of his dead chief rendered them perforce less deliberately individualistic.

Itwas during that period that Edwin V. Denby resigned as secretary of the navy and the chief executive appointed special government counsel to pursue the oil frauds. Harry Daugherty, the Ohio attorney general, left office, too.

Coolidge's approval of the budget August 14, 1923, set an economy note. It was $126,000,000 below that of the previous year.

There followed in the period before he accepted the rein of government in his own right, several of the famous vetoes of his tenure. On May 3, 1924, he vetoed the Bursum omnibus pension bill; May 15, 1924, the soldier bonus bill was disapproved by him, June 7, 1924, the postal pay increase measure was vetoed. February 25, 1924, the McNary-Haugen farm relief measure met the same fate.

As the president entered upon his new term, Frank B. Kellogg of Minnesota became his secretary of state, succeeding Charles Evans Hughes, and his official family then, numbered of his own choosing John G. Sargent, attorney general; Dwight F. Davis, secretary of war; Curtis D. Wilbur, secretary of the navy, and William M. Jardine, secretary of agriculture. The others were Harding holdovers.

In the four years that followed the high spots of his administration included:

The debacle of the naval disarmament conference.

The pocket veto of the McNary-Haugen bill.

The pocket veto of the Muscle Shoals measure.

His personal appearance at the Pan-American conference at Havana for the purpose of bettering South American relations.

The appointment of Dwight W. Morrow as ambassador to Mexico with the express understanding that he was to do his utmost to quiet apparent dislike of America in that country.

The president's close scanning of the cost of Mississippi Valley flood control measures.

Insistence of the payment of European war debts and further insistence that America remain aloof from European political affairs.

Unremitting championship of the cruiser bill.

And all that time, the "Coolidge market" boomed along and as convention time approached, the greatest bull market in all history was smashing records on the New York stock exchange.

Convention time neared and the country received no answer to what was regarded as the most important question involving President Coolidge — would he run again? The grammatically intriguing "I do not choose to run" may have answered the question in the minds of some, but it did not do so with the majority of American citizens.

Up to the eve of the convention, the silent figure was the rock on which speculative sentiment washed hopelessly. The country was given the answer at the convention, Calvin Coolidge let it be known when and as he chose and in his own way, an epitome, perhaps, of the forces that led him to success.

Calvin Coolidge first became a figure of countrywide attention for his handling of the Boston police strike after his election as governor of Massachusetts in 1917. Curiously, that was brought about by a commendatory letter from a democratic president, Woodrow Wilson. Coolidge had spent most of his active life since 1899 in public office and the creed of his career, as his friends regarded it — do the day's work and be brief — was so rigorously adhered to as his inevitable fate drew him toward the presidency.

Tragedy entered the Coolidge home life during the presidential tenure when Calvin, Jr., died.

Coolidge entered upon the duties of the presidency, which had left seemingly more robust men physically impoverished, a figure of slight stature and not particularly strong in appearance.

The storm and stress of six years as the center of swirling world affairs failed to shatter the immutable calm of the man. Calvin Coolidge at 57 leaves the White House vigorous and with an apparent greater enjoyment of life and of living, facing the future with the same philosophy that bore him successfully to his destiny.

COOLIDGE'S WIFE LIKES SIMPLE LIFE

Will Be Willing to Retire to Private Life Again

Washington, Feb. 28 (AP)—Leaving grandeur for simple, everyday things of life will be no hardship for Grace Coolidge, wife of the thirtieth president of the United States. She has stepped before from a formal existence to an apparent enjoyment of mere housewifely affairs and plain living.

In the formal and luxury tinted existence as wife of the chief executive she became a brilliant social figure. Scores of dresses hang in the spacious closets of her quarters in the White House. She has had servants on every hand, orchids and roses from the White House conservatories on her dressing table every morning.

Yet, when Calvin Coolidge retired to private life after having been governor of Massachusetts she went buoyantly and happily from the pretentious executive mansion to their Northampton home there to don a gingham apron and wield a long handled spoon over a yellow bowl.

Those who know Mrs. Coolidge best say it will be no hardship for her to give up space and grandeur for the more intimate homey things of life. During their vacation in the Black Hills, Mrs. Reilly, the housekeeper, became ill, Mrs. Coolidge quietly and easily assumed full charge of the Game Lodge and personally attended to the marketing.

The girl bookkeeper of the Rapid City meat market got the thrill of her life every morning when the president's wife called up to give her day's orders.

When notified that Mr. Coolidge had been elected vice president his wife said rather wistfully:

"I shall like going to Washington, but I know I shall like returning to Massachusetts again ever so much better."

As the wife of the governor of Massachusetts she employed no servants other than a middle aged woman who came in to help her at intervals. "It takes close managing to get along these days of the high cost of living," she said. "Although my husband has moved up it makes no difference in our mode of living. Why should it? We are happy. We are well and content. We have the necessities of life. We just try to keep our bills paid like any one else."

Another time she said:

"We New England women cling to the old days. Being the president's wife is not going to make me think less about the domestic things I've always loved."

On leaving the executive mansion Mrs. Coolidge will have none of the natural, human worries yet dear to the heart of the average woman, of how he place will get along while she is gone. The White House domestic arrangements move smoothly, impersonally on year after year, regardless of who comes and goes. Each member of the staff has been there for years.

The head usher who has general direction of first floor affairs has served eight presidents. The exit of one first lady, be she the most efficient or the most loveable, means no slowing up or friction in the domestic machinery.

But it will mean much to Mrs. Coolidge to get back to the simple verities of existence. During her six years occupancy of the White House she has not once "let down." Always she has been the gracious hostess, the friendly "first lady." There must have been moments when her soul longed for a game of tennis without a big gallery looking on, for tea downtown with a woman friend at one of the places women love.

It was as a New England school teacher conducting a class of her pupils from the Clark school for the Deaf that Grace Goodhue stepped into the White House—through her marriage. As she traversed the marble corridors and looked out on the lovely garden she little guessed that Fate, just round the corner, was waiting to thrust her into the midst of all this splendor for over half a decade. Her whole concern then was to see that her little charges got the full benefit of the excursion.

At this time Calvin Coolidge was serving his second year as city solicitor for Northampton. He became clerk of the Northampton courts in 1904 and a year later, on October 4, he married Grace Goodhue. She was 26 and he was 33. Of the romance even Washington society knows little. The reserve of Calvin Coolidge has become proverbial and to any hints concerning the meeting and courtship Mrs. Coolidge replies:

"We always felt that those things belonged exclusively to us."

Mrs. Coolidge was born in Burlington, Vt. Her father was Capt. Andrew I. Goodhue, who was appointed a steamboat inspector during the Cleveland administration. Her mother was Lemira Barrett. Grace Goodhue attended public school and then went to the University of Vermont, graduating from there in 1902. Her natural enthusiasm for life made her take readily to all the university activities, dancing, swimming, tennis and dramatics. She liked best to play Shakespearean roles just as Mrs. Hoover, her successor in the White, chose Joan of Arc as her best loved character when it came to amateur theatricals.